
REPRINTED FROM:

PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOL. L, No. 1

(September, 1960)

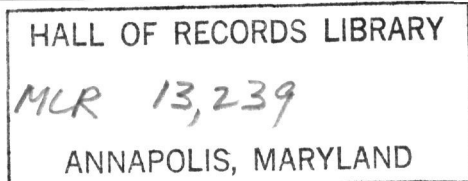


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NILES' WEEKLY REGISTER ON THE JEWS

By ISAAC M. FEIN*

"We believe this work [the *Register*] is the most copious record of miscellaneous papers in the world, presented contemporaneously, and in book form, for preservation and reference." "To the future historian we commit the record and await the judgment with full confidence."¹ Thus did the founder and the first editor Hezekiah Niles (1779-1839) and the third editor fifteen years later characterize the magazine to be discussed in this paper. These views were shared by contemporaries: editors, statesmen, and five Presidents of the country. This is also the view of present-day historians of American history of the first-half of the nineteenth century.²

The first issue of the weekly appeared on September 7, 1811, and it continued almost without any interruption until September 28, 1849. During the thirty-eight years of its existence it was published under three different names, at first as *The Weekly Register*, later as *Niles' Weekly Register* and for the last twelve years as *Niles' National Register*, and consecutively in three cities: Baltimore, Philadelphia and Washington. It had, during the thirty-eight years of its existence, an unusual length of time for any magazine at that period, four editors. The most important period in the life of the magazine was, no doubt, the period of the first twenty-two years from 1811 to 1833. It was the period of the editorship of the Quaker Hezekiah Niles who gave it its character, which it retained in a great measure till

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¹ In this paper, *Niles' Weekly Register* will be referred to as *Register*, and Hezekiah Niles (1777-1839) as Niles.

Register, vol. XLIV, Dec. 14, 1833, p. 241; vol. LXXIV, July 5, 1848, p. 1.

² A detailed evaluation of the magazine by people in different fields from the period of its inception till the present is to be found in the work about the *Register* by Norval Neil Luxon, "*Niles' Weekly Register*," *News Magazine of the Nineteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1947), "The Register and the Historian," chapter 12, pp. 288-307. It is very strange indeed that in such an exhaustive work on the subject the reference to the Jews is limited to these few words: "Niles decried the hostility to Jews in Europe and the hostility to them in America," p. 31, and left untouched hundreds of references to them in the issues of the *Register*. An examination of these references would, surely, help to present a clearer picture of the magazine as well as of Niles.

its end. That is not to say that the two periods were of equal importance. Indeed, during the first period the *Register*

constantly and actively engaged in attempting to mold and influence public opinion; during the second period its primary purpose was to report and reflect opinions as expressed by others.³

But in its interest and general attitudes to various problems, the magazine remained true to the position taken by its founder.

The magazine which was established in Baltimore became before long a publication of national and even international importance. Among its subscribers were Presidents of the country.⁴ The government provided members of Congress with a number of copies⁵ and supplied copies of the magazine to its foreign representatives, and it was also to be found in court libraries of Western Europe and even in the library of Czar Alexander of Russia.⁶

Niles, the founder of the *Register*, was a man of extremely independent character. There were no advertisements in the magazine. It was to be free from any outside influence. His purpose was

to write for and speak to not the learned and the wealthy . . . but the FREE LABORING people, like ourselves, struggling to get a little forward in the world and to educate their children.⁷

Indeed, Niles often raised his voice on behalf of the persecuted. Small wonder that in his news items to which he referred as "fireside conversations,"⁸ Niles often turned to news about Jews,

this singular and interesting people scattered all over the world and everywhere despised and maltreated.⁹

The above quotation may give the impression that Niles held the Jews in great esteem. As will be seen further, he was consistent about equality for Jews. He and the editors who followed him were bitter about anti-Semitism in any shape or form. At the same time, however, the Jews, as a group, were often criticized for "abhorrent" traits. This kind of ambivalence in the attitude to the Jews was characteristic of the age. Jews, as a group, were described in low terms. At the same time, however, Jewish equality was advocated.

³ N. N. Luxon, *op. cit.*, p. 289.

⁴ *Register*, vol. XII, May 10, 1817, p. 161; vol. XLVI, May 4, 1844, p. 146.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. XXXIII, Dec. 22, 1827, p. 265.

⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. XII, Aug. 23, 1817, p. 404.

⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. XXXIX, Nov. 27, 1830, p. 217.

⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. XXI, Nov. 24, 1821, p. 196. On the relation of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "fireside chats" to Niles' "fireside conversations" see N. N. Luxon, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁹ *Register*, vol. XI, Nov. 9, 1816, p. 168.

Unlike Thomas Kennedy, the champion of Jewish equality in Maryland, who stated during the debate on the subject in the Legislature:

I don't have the slightest acquaintance with any Jew in the world,¹⁰

Niles knew some Jews personally. He belonged to a number of social organizations with some leading Jews in Baltimore.¹¹

It was, no doubt, his personal knowledge of Jews that induced him to make a very judicious remark about a report from Warsaw that

the Jewish Rabbis and leaders have met in general assembly at Platskow, and have decided that the celebration of the Sabbath be delayed to Sunday.

To this Niles remarked:

We know not how to believe this, seeing the tenacity with which the Jews adhere to the customs of their fathers.¹²

Seemingly Niles had no objections to "tenacity" if it was sincere. It was his regard for honesty that brought about his objections to missionary activities. He suspected the missionaries because they

often use the Bible as a precursor of the sword . . . and have the word of life on their lips and the dagger concealed in their bosom.¹³

He, especially, scorned missionary activities among the Jews. He regarded both, the missionaries as well as the converted Jews, as being dishonest and doing it all for money.¹⁴ He copies a news item from the London *Literary Chronicle* that

the conversion of every Jew costs upon an average of a thousand pounds.

To this Niles adds in his characteristic manner a bitter remark:

and some of these [converts] resume it [the Jewish religion] again when no more money was to be had for being Christian.¹⁵

¹⁰ *Sketch of Proceedings in the Legislature of Maryland, December Session, 1818, on what is commonly called The Jew Bill* (Baltimore, 1819), p. 15.

¹¹ John E. Semmes, *John H. B. Latrobe and His Times, 1803-1891* (Baltimore, 1917) p. 413.

¹² *Register*, vol. XXVI, March 13, 1824, p. 19.

¹³ *Ibid.*, vol. XX, April 14, 1821, p. 101.

¹⁴ Similar conclusions were reached by the author of this paper in "The London Missionary Society in Russia in the 19th Century," *Yivo Bleter*, vol. XXIV, no. 1. (Sept.-Oct., 1944), pp. 27-46.

¹⁵ *Register*, vol. XXVI, July 17, 1824, p. 326.

He believes that

the making of a half-Christian out of a full Jew would render twenty poor and honest Christian families comfortable for a whole year.¹⁶

In Rome

there is, usually, about Easter an annual conversion of some Jew, who is baptized with great exultation, and is liberally rewarded . . . He often relaxes again around Christmas, in order to be ready for the next anniversary triumph of the faith.¹⁷

After some calculations Niles concluded that considering all the expenses of the missionary societies the conversion of a single Jew amounts to about \$100,000

a pretty round sum for Christendom to make a purchase of the scattered nation . . . but whether Jews convert Christians or Christians convert Jews what is it to us in this land of civil law and liberty?¹⁸

It was natural for one whose measure of things was derived from civil law and religious liberty to protest against anti-Semitism. There were numerous reports in the *Register* about anti-Semitic laws and acts in various countries.¹⁹ The "sickening details" about the expulsion of the Jews from the Western frontiers in Russia is prefaced with:

It was fondly hoped that the age of religious persecutions had so far ceased among those who profess the Christian faith . . . Alas! humanity trusted with spiritual power seems to have a natural propensity to a fiendish exercise of that power. Is it not almost a usurpation of God's providence where man may not trespass with impunity.²⁰

There is a report in the *Register* about

vile persecutions of the Jews in Germany . . . synagogues have been attacked and destroyed in many places.²¹

About this and similar reports, the editor remarked:

The common persecution of this people reflects no credit on the professors of Christianity.²²

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. XXX, June 3, 1826, p. 234.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. VIII, June 24, 1815, p. 293.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. XI, Dec. 14, 1816, p. 260.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. VIII, June 24, 1815, p. 293; vol. XI, Sept. 21, 1816, p. 61; vol. XI, Feb. 15, 1817, p. 405; vol. XVII, Oct. 30, 1819, p. 140; vol. XVII, Nov. 6, 1819, p. 157, and many, many more.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. LXVI, March 9, 1844, p. 27.

²¹ *Ibid.*, vol. XVII, Nov. 6, 1819, p. 157.

²² *Ibid.*, vol. X, Aug. 24, 1816, p. 429.

The editor reminds the Christian world that

the Jews have been called the "blot" of the nations, yet the Redeemer was one of them, and as his principles prevail and his commands are obeyed, we shall feel for both a deeper veneration and a stronger regard. The descendants of that noble and marked race . . . wherever they have power, they exert it to elevate their race. Wherever they have means, they employ them freely to spread among themselves education . . . We trust . . . that they will meet only with a wider and warmer sympathy.²³

Jewish adversities are noted and so is favorable news about Jews. There are very many reports about the improved position of the Jews in Germany in the 1840's, in Russia, and other European countries.²⁴ As in the case of persecutions there are editorial comments about the improved position of the Jews. The report that a "Jew Banker" was nominated Knight of the Spanish Order of Isabella is accompanied with the remark that this happened in

the country in which a Jew some scores of years back could not set his foot without incurring the risk of being burnt alive . . .²⁵

The debates in the British House of Lords on the emancipation of the Jews are reported in great detail.²⁶

Jewish characteristics are discussed time and again in the *Register*. Jewish charity, especially to non-sectarian causes, is singled out. Judah Touro's saving a church from foreclosure is fully reported under the caption "A J E W!" in capital letters followed by an exclamation mark.²⁷ There was a detailed report about

a large and respectable assembly of the congregation Sheerith Israel in the synagogue on Crosby Street, in New York for the purpose of taking measures for the relief of the famishing thousands of their fellow mortals in that unfortunate and destitute country Ireland . . . A large collection was taken up. [This is followed, in the characteristic *Register*

²³ *Ibid.*, vol. LXIX, Jan. 3, 1846, p. 284.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. LVII, Nov. 2, 1839, p. 148; vol. LXIII, Jan. 21, 1843, p. 321; vol. LXVII, Nov. 2, 1841, p. 129; vol. LXIII, Feb. 18, 1843, p. 400, and many others.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. LXIII, Jan. 7, 1843, p. 304.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. XLV, Oct. 5, 1833, p. 89; vol. XLV, Nov. 23, 1833, p. 199. The debates in the British Parliament on the Jewish question were discussed in several letters to his mother by Mendes I. Cohen, a leading Baltimore Jew, who at that time was in London. In one of them he suggested to her to send "the speeches of Breckenridge, Worthington, and Tyson on the Jew Bill to Mr. O'Connell, the Duke of Wellington, and Mr. Peel." Letters nos. 11, 13, 14, 18, 19A, 20, 22 (manuscript material in the archives of the Maryland Historical Society).

²⁷ *Register*, vol. XXV, Dec. 27, 1823, p. 262.

fashion, by giving details.] The prayer was given by Rev. J. J. Lyon; the meeting was organized by Samuel Lazarus, Isaac Philips and S. J. Jacobs, and addresses were delivered by R. H. Judah, Jonas B. Philips, and M. M. Noah.²⁸

In this case as in almost every other report the *Register* remained true to its motto "The Past — the Present — for the Future." Time and again this point is made in the *Register*:

The chief purpose of the publication is to record material for the future.²⁹

Instances of Jewish philanthropy in Europe are related on a number of occasions.³⁰ These are often given under the caption "LIBERALITY." The editorial remarks are in the vein of

This is no single instance of Hebrew liberality . . . Is there any apprehension of such FOREIGN CAPITAL ENDANGERING THE LIBERTIES OF A COUNTRY?³¹

Jewish philanthropy was a subject of praise, but Niles, a master of attack, mercilessly attacked the Jews for traits hateful to him, which he believed to be characteristic of Jews. Such attacks were coupled with a variation of the present-day "some of my best friends are Jews." In Niles' language:

We are not of those, who condemn a whole people for the acts of a few . . . Many worthy men, no doubt, belong to this people.³²

Once the conscience was cleared with such a preface, the attack became extremely vicious:

In general their interests do not appear identified with those of the communities in which they live, though there are honorable exceptions among them. They will not sit down and labor like other people. They create nothing and are mere consumers. They will not cultivate the earth, nor work at mechanical trades, preferring to live by their wit in dealing and acting as if they had a home nowhere. It is this cause, no doubt, that an hostility to them exists so extensively and that hostility is again, perhaps, a cause why they do not think and act like other people and assume the character and feeling of the nations in which they live.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. LXXII, March 13, 1847, p. 23.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. XIV, April 4, 1818, p. 89; vol. XXXIII, Jan. 5, 1828, p. 289, and many more.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. XXX, Aug. 12, 1826, p. 42; vol. XLIII, Oct. 6, 1832, p. 94; vol. LXV, Sept. 2, 1843, p. 2, and many more.

³¹ *Ibid.*, vol. XLIII, Oct. 6, 1832, p. 94.

³² *Ibid.*, vol. XXIII, Oct. 19, 1822, p. 99.

All this is followed with the most unexpected:

But all this has nothing to do with their rights of men.³³

Niles "knew" that

not one in 500 of them [the Jews], perhaps, follows any fixed and laborious profession for a livelihood.³⁴

Again and again he returned to the same theme of the Jews' "general repugnance for honest labor . . ."³⁵ The division of all of mankind into "producers" and those who enjoy the fruits of the producers' labors or the "consumers" was paramount with Niles.³⁶ The Jews, however, with "honorable exceptions" are all of one cloth, all live at the expense of others, all are "mere consumers."

Having said all this, Niles sought an explanation for this "fact." His explanation was of great moment. From it followed the absolute necessity of giving Jews equality, for the Jews are what they are because

the uncertainty of their condition have, doubtless, given them NATURAL characteristics, if the word may be allowed, which distinguishes them in all parts of the world . . . They have so long been the sport of persecution and liable to removal from their possessions at the whim and caprice of governing power . . . and they seem to have no home.³⁷

The same was repeated thirty years later, seven years after Niles' death: "The Jews are countrymen to each other, be their birthplace or sojourn where it may."³⁸ The Jews are continually treated in the *Register* as a group. They are what they are, and what they are is not at all pleasant, only because they are treated as undesirable strangers.

The Jews would change if only they lived under freedom. In spite of Niles' attitude to "consumers," and all Jews were in his eyes consumers, he had no fear of the Jews being detrimental to the country. He favored Jewish immigration to the United States as he favored the immigration of others. He was

pleased to see the tide of emigration that is setting towards the United States, but regrets, the necessity that compels the European to leave his home in search of freedom and safety . . . I greet their arrival and

³³ *Ibid.*, vol. XIX, Oct. 21, 1820, p. 114.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. X, Aug. 24, 1816, p. 429.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. XXIII, Oct. 19, 1822, p. 99.

³⁶ Richard Gabriel Stone, *Hezekiah Niles as an Economist* (Baltimore, 1933), *passim*.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. X, Aug. 24, 1816, p. 429.

³⁸ *Ibid.* vol. LXIX, Jan. 3, 1846, p. 284.

say to the people of all nations: come and partake with us in the blessings of independence and in due time be to us as our kindred. Come and help us to dig canals, clear water courses, make roads . . . The flag of the Union is large enough for us and for you and we have room enough to spare. Bring with you a love of liberty, habits of temperance and industry. Your capital may be useful and convenient but the others are of more worth to us than the wealth of the Indies.³⁹

The *Register* carried many reports about Jewish immigrants in Europe, about propaganda among European Jews to emigrate to America,⁴⁰ about wealthy Jews supporting poor immigrants⁴¹ and about a curious rumor current among European Jews that President James Knox Polk was a Jew and that this served them as

an example of what a Jew can attain in the United States.⁴²

The reason for Jewish emigration is, of course, the fact that

the legal disabilities they lie under in some countries of Europe and the strong prejudices they have to encounter . . . driving many of the Jews to seek refuge in the United States.⁴³

As early as 1820, Niles reprinted a piece on this subject from the *Albany Gazette*:

We have often wondered why the Jews do not emigrate more frequently to the United States. Why should they suffer from intolerance of other governments, when an asylum, so desirable, can be found in this country . . . The property of the foreign Jews principally consists of money and merchandise, which can be easily removed to any country . . . Besides after all is said . . . on this subject, this is the most preferable country for the Jews; here they can have their Jerusalem . . . Here they can build their temple . . . Here they can lay their heads on their pillow at night without fear of mobs, of bigotry, of persecution.⁴⁴

This was, basically, the approach of the *Register* to Jewish immigration to the United States throughout the thirty-eight years of its existence.

While certain that the Jews "could have in America their Jerusalem," Niles did not consider Jewish immigration to the United States a final solution of the Jewish problem. He was, what we would

³⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. X, Aug. 3, 1816, p. 373.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. LXXIV, Oct. 4, 1848, p. 221.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, vol. XVII, Oct. 30, 1819, p. 140; vol. XVII, Jan. 22, 1820, p. 351; vol. LXVII, Oct. 5, 1844, p. 80.

⁴² *Ibid.*, vol. LXX, July 4, 1846, p. 274.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, vol. LXIII, Jan. 7, 1843, p. 304.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. XVII, Jan. 29, 1820, p. 371.

call today a "political Zionist." He agreed with an article in the *Munich Gazette* that

all Jewish problems would cease if they [the Jews] would re-establish their new Kingdom.⁴⁵

Numerous reports were published in the *Register* about immigration to Palestine and conditions in that country.⁴⁶ To a report published by the London *Courier* about "a Jew of the tribe of Dan, who collected a prodigious number of discontented Jews — 200,000" whose object is to wrest Palestine from the Turks, Niles comments editorially:

We are not disposed to give much credit to the preceding — yet it may be true. We know of no reason why a very numerous and severely oppressed people should not rise up and attempt to shake off the yoke of their obdurate tyrants . . . This singular and interesting people scattered all over the world and everywhere despised and maltreated have continued as a separate race of men in all nations, having a home in none. It is easy to imagine that under such circumstances they may be more easily gathered to a given point than any other clan or sect under heaven, as well as obtain for themselves the right and privileges which they see enjoyed by others and to fix themselves a HOME and a COUNTRY. There is said to be 13 millions [*sic!*] of Jews in Europe and they are exceedingly numerous in Asia, spreading from the Archipelago to the borders of China. In Egypt, Abyssinia and the Barbary states they compose a very considerable part of the population and their united numbers can hardly be less than 30–40 millions [*sic!*], perhaps even more. The concentration of one-half of these would, indeed, produce a strange revolution in the moral and political state of the world. Many of them are possessed of princely talents and when to the force of their numbers and wealth should be added a portion of that religious zeal which caused their ancestors to perform such deeds of desperate courage, who shall calculate the effect . . . Those parts of the East so celebrated in sacred and profane history, now so degraded and lost to all that is good and great, may again be the seat of commerce and useful arts. The deserts of Palestine brought into cultivation by patient industry may again blossom as the rose and Jerusalem miserable as it is, speedily rival the cities of the world for beauty, splendor and wealth.⁴⁷

A quarter of a century later, years after Niles' death, the *Register* reprints from the German paper *Der Orient* an extremely strong

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. XI, Nov. 16, 1816, p. 188.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. LVII, Nov. 9, 1839, p. 176; vol. LXIII, Oct. 29, 1842, p. 144, and many more.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. XI, Nov. 9, 1816, p. 168.

appeal to the Jews to rally in the cause of restoration of a Jewish state in Palestine:

People of Jehovah, raise yourselves from thousand years' slumber! Rally round leaders! Have really the will, a Moses will not be wanting. The rights of nations will never grow old. Take your possession of the land of your fathers; build a third time the temple of Zion, greater and more magnificent than ever. Trust in the Lord, who has led you safely through the vale of misery thousands of years, He also will not forsake you in your last conflict.⁴⁸

In 1829, the *Register* reported that the Rothschilds had "purchased Jerusalem." Niles comments on this report:

We see nothing improbable that the Rothschilds should purchase the ancient capital of their nation . . . They [the Rothschilds] might instantly, as it were, gather a large nation together, soon capable of defending itself, and having a wonderful influence over the commerce and condition of the east, rendering Judea again the place of deposit of a large portion of the wealth of the ancient world.⁴⁹

It is, at least, partly in the light of Niles' attitude to "Zionism" that we have to consider his violent opposition to Mordecai Manuel Noah's "territorial" plans, which will be discussed later.

The volumes of the *Register* are full of reports of many phases of Jewish life. There were reports on the Reform movement in various European countries.⁵⁰ There is, of course, a report on

The Reform Society of the Israelites in Charleston, which made considerable alterations in the form of worship and use of an organ in their temple. The Society seems to go on prosperously.⁵¹

Consecrations of synagogues in different places of the world are recorded and sometimes described in great detail.⁵² There is detailed description of the consecration of the Congregation Kahal Kadosh Mickve Israel [Mikveh Israel, in Philadelphia]. Here we have the full text of the inscription on the plate placed in the cornerstone, the names of the members of the building committee, et cetera.⁵³ There is an extremely detailed report on the consecration of "Rodafe

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. LIX, Jan. 23, 1841, p. 321.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. XXXVII, Nov. 28, 1829, p. 214.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. XXVI, March 13, 1824, p. 19; vol. XXIX, Nov. 5, 1825, p. 149, and many more.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, vol. XXXI, Dec. 9, 1826, p. 230.

⁵² *Ibid.*, vol. XXV, Sept. 13, 1823, p. 24; vol. XXV, Nov. 1, 1826, p. 143, and others.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, vol. XXIII, Jan. 4, 1823, p. 275.

[Rodeph] Shalom (Followers of Peace) Congregation in Philadelphia." Here is noted the presence of

the chief justice and most associate justices in the supreme court, the Reverend Provost and most of the professors of the University and most of the professors of the central high school, and a large representation of the Christian clergy and gentlemen of the bar, and the gentlemen of the press.

This is followed by the most detailed description of the program.⁵⁴

Under the caption EVENTS OF THE LAST WAR [the War of 1812] the *Register* reports that in

The Hebrew Synagogue of Charleston, S. C. prayers were conducted and a resolution was adopted: Feeling grateful towards the Almighty Dispenser of Events, for having pleased to crown with success the arms of the United States both by land and by sea, the Congregation appoints Sunday the 31st ult. as a day of thanksgiving and prayer.⁵⁵

Along with reports on consecrations there are reports on dissensions in synagogues:

Like many other religious sects, the Elm street Synagogue, N. Y., is distracted by dissensions. On Friday evening, it was found necessary by some of the more orderly disposed, to engage officers of the police to attend a meeting and enforce the observance of proper order while the exercises of the house were in progress.⁵⁶

There were reports about meetings in this country as well as overseas in connection with the Damascus Affair.⁵⁷ The *Register* reports of gifts sent to Sir Moses Montefiore by

Jews who are grateful to him for his part in the Father Thomas affair.⁵⁸

Important as well as routine matters of Jewish interest are reported. We have a report on the death of Gershom M. Seixas "of the Hebrew Church,"⁵⁹ of the death of a rich Jew in Hungary "who left 8 millions of guildens," who had for twenty years carried his pack.⁶⁰ There is even a report about the Jews in China.⁶¹ Along with

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. LXIV, May 6, 1843, p. 149.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. V, Nov. 13, 1813, p. 184.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. LXIX, Nov. 29, 1845, p. 208.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. LVIII, Aug. 22, 1840, p. 400; vol. LIX, Sept. 19, 1840, p. 32.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. LXIII, Oct. 15, 1842, p. 97.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. X, Aug. 24, 1816, p. 431.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. VII, Nov. 30, 1815, p. 221.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, vol. XXXI, Nov. 18, 1826, p. 182.

the reports about persecutions of Jews in Europe, the *Register* reports about the importance of some wealthy Jews.

The Jews at present, or lately, have been among the most important persons in Europe. They settle exchanges and put up or down stock at their will. But except in the business of turning and making what is called money these "great dignatories" are very common and indifferent men . . .

Even so there is a favorable comment about these "common men."

The Jew [Rothschild] behaved better than many Christians do. The latter make their wives and daughters rich though their own creditors may want bread in too many cases.⁶²

There were two events in American Jewish life to which Niles returned time and again and which the *Register* reported in great detail. To one, Mordecai Manuel Noah's project to settle the Jews on Grand Island, New York, we alluded earlier.⁶³

Niles and Noah were bitter political opponents. Invectives were used by both. Niles accused Noah whose

favorite manner is to misrepresent whatever another has said if it suits his purpose better . . . [Noah] is the most incompetent man that ever dabbled in party politics.⁶⁴

To Niles, Noah was

a notorious shuffler . . . It is impossible to feel angry with what is so ridiculous . . . CONTEMPTIBLE, but the thing [Noah's remarks] is unworthy of so strong a respectable term.⁶⁵

He, Noah, is a "dishonor to the art of printing."⁶⁶

There can be no doubt that Niles' bitter opposition to Noah's Grand Island plans stemmed from his mistrust of Noah. On the other hand, he was, surely, influenced by his "Zionism."

The first item of news about the plan is a reprint of a long article from the *Albany Gazette*.⁶⁷ The news is factual. There was no editorial comment. To the report of the ceremonies in connection with the laying of the cornerstone, Niles added:

⁶² *Ibid.*, vol. XXX, April 22, 1826, p. 144.

⁶³ Page 12 f.

⁶⁴ *Register*, vol. XXVI, Jan. 14, 1829, p. 299.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. LX, Jan. 11, 1831, p. 251.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. LX, May 14, 1831, p. 182. There were many similar expressions in many issues of the *Register*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. XVII, Jan. 29, 1820, p. 371.

Mr. Noah, editor of the New York *National Advocate*, issued a ridiculous proclamation to the Jews proclaiming himself "governor and judge of Israel."⁶⁸

He returned to the report in the subsequent issue. He explains the reason for not publishing in full Noah's long speech at the laying of the cornerstone. He does not feel

fully justified in giving up so much room to an INDIVIDUAL employed to make the most out of the bargain, which he has negotiated, for, most probably, some FOREIGN SPECULATORS, Jews themselves, perhaps, who have no sort of objection to advance their own wealth at the cost of their fellows — and to "get money," honestly if they can — BUT TO GET MONEY.

This is followed by the highlights of the proclamation to the Jews of the world:

Mr. Noah has NOMINATED HIMSELF "Governor and judge of Israel," which he says that he is, aye, and by, "the grace of God" too! He tells us that the island is to be an asylum for the Jews. He REVIVES the government of the Jewish nation, and COMMANDS all the venerable Rabbies, Elders, etc. to respect his proclamation and to give it credence and effect. He ORDERS a census of all the Jews, and DIRECTS that they shall be registered. The Jews that are in military employment of emperors, kings, etc. he ENJOINS to conduct themselves bravely and with fidelity "until further ORDERS." He COMMANDS them to be neutral in the war between the Greeks and the Turks. PRESCRIBES the giving of gift to his "pious brethern" at Jerusalem. He ABOLISHES polygamy forever, and PROHIBITS marriages, unless the parties can read and write. ORDERS the saying of prayers. DIRECTS that the black Jews of India and Africa shall have an equality of rights, and DECREES that all the American Indians are the descendants of the lost tribes! HE LEVIES A CAPITATION TAX, OF ONE DOLLAR PER ANNUM ON EVERY JEW THAT THERE IS IN THE WORLD [TO] PASS INTO HIS TREASURY! Names commissioners to act for him in different countries, to whom he will send INSTRUCTIONS. He appoints a day in February next, to be observed as a general thanksgiving, and wishes to be remembered in the prayers of his brethern. All which is "given in Buffalo, the second day of Tisri, in the year of the world 5586, corresponding with the 15th of September, 1825," a strange mixture of Christianity and Judaism, and the whole is signed, "By the judge, A. B. Seixas, sec. *pro tem*."

The beginning of the article in which the editor had stated that he did not feel "justified in giving up so much room" is forgotten. Niles continues with his comments on the proclamation:

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. XIX, Sept. 24, 1825, p. 54.

It is very possible that this SPECULATION may succeed, so far as to fill the pockets of Mr. Noah and his associates — which, it is plainly evident, is the CORNERSTONE of the project just developed . . . We do not see any reason why Mr. Noah may not make as good a judge, high priest or King, as Ferdinand of Spain, Charles of France, or George of England . . . and, surely the Jewish women will speak well of him for abolishing polygamy . . . Mr. Noah is paid for his services, and bound to do the best that he can do for his employers — and if he can QUIZ the Jews into the payment of SIX MILLION OF DOLLARS A YEAR [for there are supposed to be six millions of them], he will do a very great business indeed.⁶⁹

Niles returned to the subject of Noah's "speculations" and adds in his characteristic manner:

If assistant judges are needed, he [Noah] can find a plenty of them among our Christian land speculators, provided the descendants of Abraham will put down the cash . . . money is the thing.⁷⁰

Niles ridicules Noah further

if partial success attends it [Noah's project] we shall be prepared to hear another proclamation that our brother editor is self-declared to be, at least, the immediate forerunner of the expected Messiah.⁷¹

On January 21, 1826, Niles reprinted in the *Register* the full text of a letter by the Chief Rabbi of Cologne, who objected to Noah's call to the Jews, or as Niles has it in "response to Mr. Noah's facetious proclamation to the Jews." Along with the Rabbi's sarcastic remarks in which he calls Noah "a visionary of good intentions," there is also published Noah's reply to the letter. In it he dismisses the Rabbis opposition to his plans, does not mind being called a "visionary," and stresses the point that "the result of the experiment will show something of practical utility."

Having presented both points of view, Niles feels free to attack Noah, who

caucused himself willingly, in the words of the Song of Deborah, to receive a capitation tax from all the Jews of the world.⁷²

Of course, Niles did not trust Noah. There was, however, the additional element of his belief in the "ingathering" of the Jews in Palestine. On this basis, too, he opposed Noah's plans:

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. XXIX, Oct. 1, 1825, p. 69.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. XXIX, Jan. 21, 1826, pp. 330-331.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, vol. XXIX, Oct. 1, 1825, p. 69.

⁷² *Ibid.*, vol. XXIX, Jan. 27, 1826, p. 331.

A gathering of the Jews on a little island in the Niagara river, previous to a reconquest of Canaan . . . [is] a queer notion, indeed.⁷³

Years later, after Niles' death and the failure of the Grand Island plan, when Noah too became more concerned with plans of restoration in Palestine rather than with "territorial" plans, the *Register* had kind words to say about Noah. He is referred to as one

whose enthusiasm upon the subject of Jewish restoration has been established during his whole life.

The *Register* reprints from the *New York Herald* a lecture delivered by Noah before a Christian audience on the topic of "The Restoration of the scattered tribes of Israel to the Lord of Palestine." In this long address, which was essentially a review of Jewish history, Noah appealed to his listeners to

Extend to them [the Jews] your powerful protection in the fulfillment of their destiny by helping to restore them to the land of their forefathers and the possession of their ancient heritage.

He expresses the belief that

a closer approximation, mutual surrender of prejudices and a greater reliance of Christians on what constitutes primitive Christianity will, at once, show how slender is the line that divides us . . . The second advent, so called . . . cannot take place till after the restoration is accomplished.⁷⁴

The restoration of the Jews in Palestine, an idea which was so dear to the founder of the *Register*, remained a favorable subject with the *Register* throughout its existence. When the personal animosity between Niles and Noah was no more an issue, the latter was no longer scorned in the columns of the *Register*. He is quoted on the problem of restoration. Much space is given to his study on Jewish statistics.⁷⁵

⁷³ *Ibid.*, vol. XXIX, Oct. 1, 1825, p. 69.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. LXVII, Sept. 21, 1844, p. 37.

⁷⁵ Statistics about Jews, reliable as well as extremely unreliable, are to be found in many issues of the *Register*. Statistics concerning the Jewish population throughout the world, as well as of Jews in different countries, together with related subjects are discussed a number of times. The Jewish population of the world is estimated in the *Register* in various years as follows:

1816: "Between thirty and forty millions, perhaps even more." *Register*, vol. XI, Nov. 9, 1816, p. 168.

1825: Six millions. *Ibid.*, vol. XXIX, Oct. 1, 1825, p. 69.

1829: "At least 2,700,000." This figure is based on an article on this subject, published in the *Saturday Evening Post*, and reprinted by the *Register*. The article reads in part:

As was to be expected the *Register* exhibited great concern with a Jewish problem in its own backyard, in Maryland. The struggle for Jewish equality in this state lasted for full three decades. It began with a Memorial to the Legislature by leading Baltimore Jews in 1797. Petitions were re-introduced time and again only to be consistently rejected. It was only in 1818 that at the request of the champion of Jewish equality, Thomas Kennedy, a committee was appointed

to consider the justice and expediency of extending to persons professing the Jewish religion, the same privileges that are enjoyed by Christians.^{75a}

A bill to this effect was introduced and defeated. The "Jew Bill," as the bill became known, was reintroduced a number of times only to be

... It appears that this singular people are now as numerous as ever and at least 2,700,000 in number, belonging to different sects of Rabbinites, Caraites, Samaritans, Yahudis, Malabars, etc. . . . Total in Europe, 1,644,000; in Asia, 542,000; in Africa, 480,000; in the United States, 15,000. This number may be deemed tolerably accurate . . . Very few can speak the Syrian or modern Hebrew; the languages most widely spoken by them are Arabic, Italian, German, Polish Jew dialect and Turkish.

Ibid., vol. XXXVI, May 9, 1829, p. 166.

1835: Six millions. *Ibid.*, vol. LXXIV, Sept. 13, 1848, p. 174.

1844: Six millions. This figure is based on statistics provided by Mordecai Manuel Noah in his correspondence to the *Mercantile Journal* of New York. Noah's letter reads in part:

... A late number of your paper contained the following paragraph: "Jews. It is said that the total number of Jews throughout the world is estimated at 3,163,700, and it is said that this number never materially varied from the time of David downwards . . ." looking forward to the speedy fulfillment of the promises made to that peculiar and favored race in the restoration to the land of their ancestors. I have been at considerable pains to obtain a census . . . It appears that the Jewish nation numbers full six millions of people . . .

Ibid., vol. LXVII, Sept. 21, 1844, p. 37.

The following information is found about the Jews in the United States:

1843: 60,000 Jews in the United States (*ibid.*, vol. LXIV, May 6, 1843, p. 160).

1843: 10,000 Jews in New York (*ibid.*, vol. LXIII, Jan. 7, 1843, p. 304).

1845: "Upwards of 20,000" in New York (*ibid.*, vol. LXVIII, June 14, 1845, p. 240).

The number of synagogues in the United States in 1843 is given as follows: Six synagogues in New York (*ibid.*, vol. LXIII, Jan. 7, 1843, p. 304). Cleveland, Ohio — 3; Albany, N. Y. — 1; Easton, Pa. — 1; Philadelphia, Pa. — 2; New York, N. Y. — 6; Syracuse, N. Y. — 1; Newport, R. I. — 1; Baltimore, Md. — 1; besides a few others in different places (*ibid.*, vol. LXIV, May 6, 1843, p. 160).

(In Baltimore there were in 1843 three synagogues: The Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, established in 1829; Fell's Point Hebrew Friendship Congregation established in 1838 and Har Sinai Verein, established in 1842.)

^{75a} *Register*, vol. XV, Dec. 19, 1818, p. 294.

defeated time and again. It was finally passed on February 26, 1826. According to this bill

every citizen of this state professing the Jewish Religion, and who shall hereafter be appointed to any office or public trust under the State of Maryland, shall in addition to the oaths required to be taken by the constitution and laws of the State of the United States, make and subscribe a declaration of his belief in a future state of rewards and punishments, in the stead of the declaration now required by the constitution and form of government of this state.⁷⁶

Throughout the years of the struggle for Jewish equality, Niles was in the forefront, defending the right of the Jews. He called upon the people of the state to emancipate the Jews from "political slavery." To the argument that it is not worth it to go into the trouble of changing the constitution for the sake of the few Jewish residents in Maryland, Niles replied:

The number of persons professing the Jewish religion in the State of Maryland is very small, but if there were only ONE such, the constitution ought to be altered in his favor. The day of faggot has passed, and tests of belief in any particular set of dogmas only tend to make hypocrites. The good man does not require them and the bad fearlessly march through them. The persecution of the Jews is a fragment of that spirit which we ourselves, as Christians, prefer to complain against their ancestors . . . Those who profess to follow his [Christ's] leading by uniting the affairs of religion with those of state, do all they can to pretend to establish for him a kingdom here PROVIDED THEY THEMSELVES MAY GOVERN IT and persecute those who do not come up to their standards of POLITICAL RELIGION. What strange inconsistency — how absurd and unjust. It has several times before been attempted to expunge the odious remnant of POLITICAL RELIGION from the Constitution of Maryland.⁷⁷

A year later, in 1820, when the bill came up again in the Legislature, Niles called upon its members

to exonerate this persecuted sect from the odious restrictions which our INCOMPREHENSIBLE constitution imposes upon them . . . Let us do our duty and place them upon an equality with ourselves . . . It is not the business of the state to judge them. Their religion is an affair between them and their Maker . . . It cannot do harm to invest them with the enjoyment of every political right which we possess. It is time that the SPIRIT of those days when fire and faggot were brought in furious aid of the meek doctrines of Christ should be banished from

⁷⁶ This provision of a special Jewish oath is still on the Statutes' Books of Maryland.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. XV, Jan. 16, 1819, p. 388.

the earth, as repugnant to all that is reasonable, all that is rightful, all that is just.⁷⁸

The bill was again rejected. In the meantime another bill was introduced which would

extend to the citizens of Maryland the same civil rights and religious privileges that are enjoyed under the Constitution of the United States.

This bill was more general. It did away with all religious tests and did not mention Jews at all. The bill never passed the legislature. A religious oath is still the law of Maryland.^{78a}

The defeat of this bill was reported by Niles with a comment indicating that he believed that there is more of a chance to push through the "Jew Bill" rather than to do away with any religious oath.

This [the rejection of the bill] was not expected . . . a bill [is] before the house of delegates that has special regard to the EMANCIPATION of the Jews — which is thought will pass⁷⁹

Again Niles is fighting against the

. . . irreligious restrictions which they [the Jews] are subjected to in this state . . .⁸⁰ [and against] the anti-Christian and anti-republican provisions of the constitution of the state of Maryland.⁸¹

In the elections to the Legislature in 1823, the defenders of Jewish equality met with a strong opposition on the part of a "Christian Ticket." Kennedy's chief opponent in Washington County was the septuagenarian, Benjamin Calloway. Niles was all for Kennedy. He reprinted Calloway's attack upon Kennedy prefacing it in his characteristic sarcastic manner:

The following is copied from the *Herald* published in Hagerstown and I thought that it might be well to preserve it as a curiosity.

Then follows Calloway's bitter denunciation of Kennedy, who by his Jew Bill makes

an attempt to bring into popular contempt the Christian religion . . . Preferring as I do Christianity to Judaism, Deism, Unitarianism or many other sort of new (sic) fangled ism, I deprecate any change in

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. XIX, Oct. 21, 1820, p. 114.

^{78a} A case is pending in the courts of the state, on the validity of the law, at the time of the writing of this paper.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. XXIII, Jan. 18, 1823, p. 307.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. XXIII, March 11, 1823, p. 33.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, vol. XXIII, June 25, 1823, p. 336.

our State government, calculated to afford the least chance to the enemies, of Christianity.⁸²

The *Register* reports "with much regret" the victory of the Christian Ticket and the belief is expressed that under such conditions

our constitution will not be augmented as proposed . . . by striking out the religious test required of members of the legislature and other appointed officers. It is a shame that in this enlightened age and in this free country an attempt should be made by government to FORCE the conscience of men in matters of faith or prescribe the duties which they owe their CREATOR.⁸³

Kennedy, along with fifteen other members of the House of Delegates who voted for the Jew Bill, were defeated, but the bill was introduced by Colonel Worthington. It was in the course of this speech that Worthington informed the members of the Legislature that according to information which he received from Solomon Etting there were at least 150 Jews in Maryland.⁸⁴ The *Register* reports

with extreme mortification . . . that the bill was "negatived" . . . Comment is useless. Indeed, the language that would be fitting for the subject would be very unsuitable.⁸⁵

Kennedy was re-elected in 1824 and he reintroduced the bill. Niles again came to its defense.

It is abusive to common sense to talk about republicanism, while we refuse liberty of conscience in matters so important as those which have relation to what a man owes his CREATOR as to the articles of his religious faith.⁸⁶

This time the bill passed and Niles publishes the full text of the bill with the following editorial comment:

The "Jew Bill" as it is called — or a bill to alter the constitution so as to relieve persons from POLITICAL disqualifications on account of their

⁸² *Ibid.*, vol. XXV, Sept. 6, 1823, p. 6 (letter published in *The Herald* of Hagerstown, Aug. 18, 1823).

⁸³ *Register*, vol. XXV, Oct. 11, 1823, p. 81.

⁸⁴ *Speeches on the Jew Bill, in the House of Delegates of Maryland*, by H. M. Breckenridge, Col. W. G. D. Worthington, and John S. Tyson (Philadelphia, 1829), p. 113. It is worth noting that in 1817 Solomon Etting sent a contribution to the Mill Street Synagogue and stated in the accompanying letter there were only three Jewish families in Baltimore. Hyman B. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654-1680* (Philadelphia, 1945), p. 588. What Etting, no doubt, had in mind was that there were only three Jewish families whom he approached for a contribution.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. XXV, Feb. 7, 1824, p. 357.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. XXVIII, Feb. 5, 1825, p. 354.

RELIGIOUS opinions . . . passed both branches of the legislature . . . Before it is effective it must be passed by the next succeeding legislature.⁸⁷

The bill, finally, became law on January 6, 1826. In great exultation Niles informed his readers about

the political liberation of persons held in servitude for CONSCIENCE SAKE, so a late disgraceful part of our constitution is absolved. JEWS ARE FREE MEN.⁸⁸

Later in the same year Niles again was in a position to report news "complimentary to ourselves as citizens of Baltimore." The occasion was the election of the first two Jews, Solomon Etting and Jacob I. Cohen, Jr., to the City Council.

They are the first Jews ever elected by the people to office in Maryland being until lately denied the rights of citizenship by the court of the state.⁸⁹

The seventy-six volumes of the *Register* — each volume over 400 pages, a total of over 30,000 pages — are not only an important source for general American history, but also a source for Jewish history. More important, however, is the fact that the news items and the editorials of the *Register* were widely read since the magazine "was, emphatically the mentor of the country papers,"⁹⁰ and were liberally reprinted from it. "The nation's favorite newsweekly,"⁹¹ which was "easily first in importance among the periodicals on the period,"⁹² was a tremendous force in influencing public opinion and is, therefore, an extremely important source for understanding the press of the period in its attitude to Jews and Jewish rights in America.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. XXVIII, March 5, 1825, p. 3.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. XXIX, Jan. 14, 1826, p. 308.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. XXXI, Oct. 14, 1826, p. 102.

⁹⁰ Albert J. Beveridge, *The Life of John Marshall*, 4 vols. (Boston, 1916-1919), vol. IV, p. 312.

⁹¹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (New York, 1945), p. 58.

⁹² Frederick Jackson Turner, *Rise of New West, 1819-1829* [vol. XIV of *The American Nation Series*] (New York, 1906), p. 341.